

MISSION TO A MIND

BY JAMES RESTON, JR.

"Do you feel comfortable?" the soft voice asks, seemingly from here and now.

"Very comfortable," the explorer replies from a water bed in his darkened capsule. He is not 170 miles up in the stratosphere, but in Nellysford, Virginia. His mission: to explore the outback, the lower depths of man's subconscious mind.

"How does the library appear to you now?" Control asks, carefully checking the gauges on the console before him.

"Same as usual." Though the explorer is still aware of his physical senses, not yet very deep in the hole, his words echo from a distance. He has been to the library three times before, and there is no excitement or anticipation in his slow, eerie drone from subterranean regions. Nevertheless, even in this state, he knows that he must probe the contents of the library, not just view it from the outside as he has done before.

"Very interesting," the explorer murmurs pleurably. "I sense energy forms." It seems like an offhand observation.

"Is there anything unusual or different?" Control asks.

"There is an area here that I did not perceive before. The exterior looks like a kind of airplane. It sits on a flat rock over a large cavern or cave."

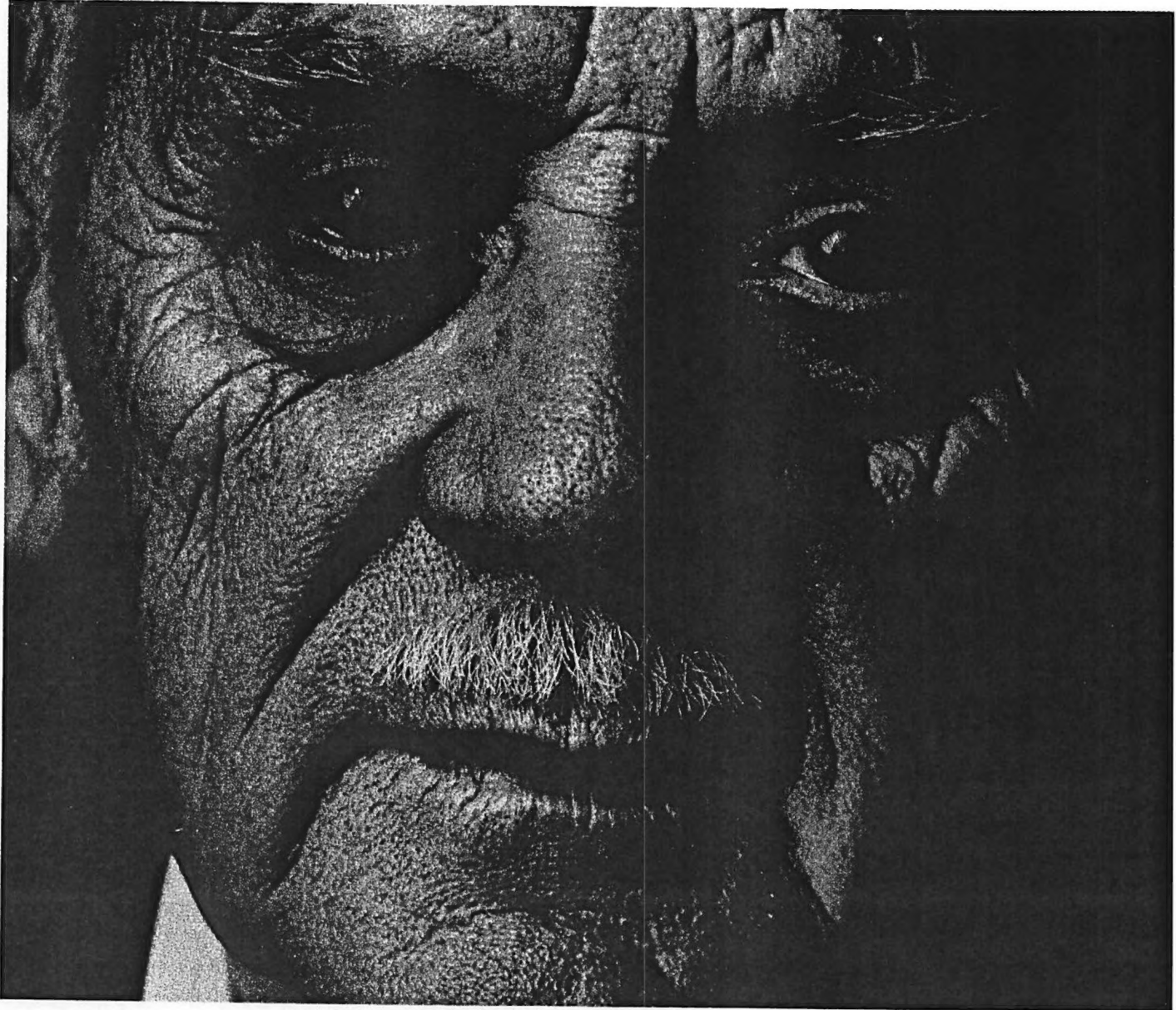
"The library is a vehicle of some sort?" Control remarks in a tone of some surprise.

"Apparently. The exterior is very large . . . the interior is small . . .

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“On occasion he can leave his physical body, visiting other worlds with his spirit alone.”



Robert Monroe, the sixty-nine-year-old leader of the New Age community, in portrait (above); a former radio executive, he is seated at his console (far right).

esoteric . . . a sensed thing."

"Are you ready to probe the library?" Control asks, an urgent seriousness to his tone.

"Yes."

The mission begins.

I drive through the winter landscape of the Shenandoah Valley, headed for Jerry Falwell country. The preacher's aura, expanding with the sweep of radio waves from his giant transmitting tower in Lynchburg, is strong enough to interfere with television reception and drown out all other broadcast voices.

My final destination, Nelson County, borders on the city of Lynchburg, and it falls easily within the preacher's enunciation of the Word. Yet, the county finds its identity more in mod-

ern television than in hard-shelled Baptism. This is the mythical site of *The Waltons*, and these are the hills that John Boy and Grandpa Walton warmed with their love.

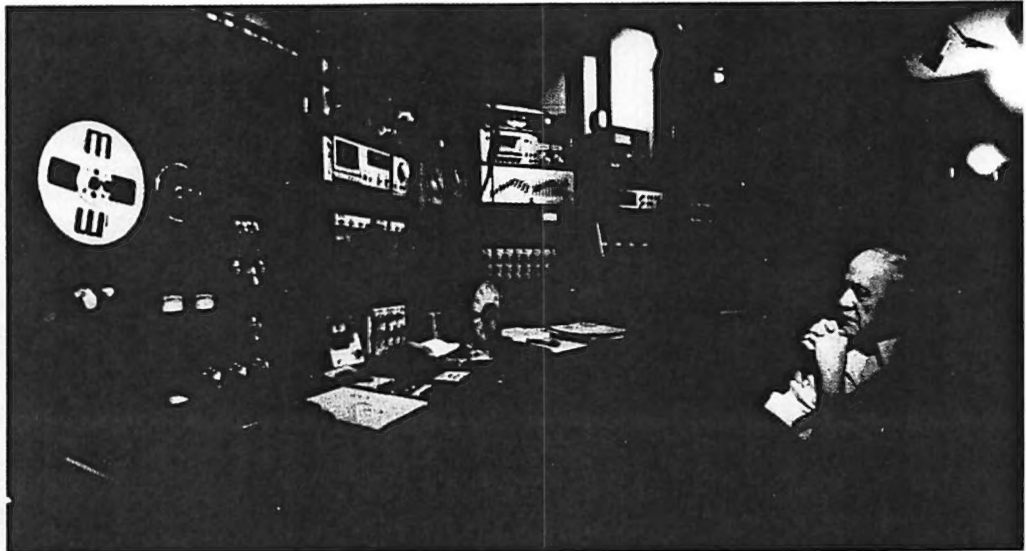
Driving past old tar-paper shacks, through streets without a single traffic light or parking meter, I turn off onto Adial Church Road and drive up a ridge to Nellysford. I note the old Baptist church, a community center since 1854, when it was built with a balcony for blacks and a separate section for the ladies. I pass over the north fork of Rockfish River, which swelled to a great wall of water, killing more than 200 people during Hurricane Camille in 1969. Pondering the folklore of this backwater spot—Falwell, the Wal-

tons, and Hurricane Camille—I come upon Robert's Mountain, home of an exotic complex known as the Monroe Institute of Applied Sciences.

The natives, steeped in their own brand of mystery, are not sure what to make of the Monroe Institute (opening spread, on left, with its creator, Robert Monroe, at right). It has been here for eight years, and they still understand little of what it is, except that it has something to do with the human brain. Even when the *Waynesboro News-Virginian* ran an article detailing the institute's work—explaining that it uses sound waves to induce altered states of consciousness—local people did not get the facts quite straight.

"Did you read that story in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 102



MISSION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 53

paper this morning about that place over the mountain?" a regular at the Moose Club is said to have asked.

"Sure," came the reply. "They take a brain from one body and put it in another . . . and it still works!"

As I climb the dirt road to the top of the ridge, I find myself in a complex of three modern, slant-roofed buildings, positioned to overlook 850 acres of the institute spread out below. The community was established here in 1981 upon certain precepts: Man's physical existence is only a temporary manifestation of a permanent, spiritual identity. He can, on occasion, leave his physical body, visiting other worlds with his spirit alone. Upon death, he returns to the spiritual reality from which he came, taking with him the wisdom he gained on Earth. Man can communicate with the creator. Indeed, he is part of the creator, and as a citizen of the New Age, he is obliged to search for truth.

If it's truth you're after, the main pavilion of the Monroe Institute seems to be the place to start. The building has the spare decor of a mountain lodge, including fragrant cedar paneling and brownish-red rugs, the color of Virginia mud. Downstairs I come upon the CHEC units, short for controlled holistic environmental chambers. These capsules, complete with bed, instrument panel, and stereo headphones, are designed for the institute's explorers. They are psychonauts who, like the library-bound traveler, spend a large segment of their week in total darkness listening to the voice of Control.

Stepping outside for a moment, I soon see a maroon pickup truck bounce toward me, and from newspaper clippings I've read, I recognize the man behind the wheel. Robert Monroe, sixty-nine, greets me with open friendliness, and I pile in for a quick tour of his New Age community. His pallid face is lined, and his thin mustache provides a whimsical balance to dark, protruding eyes.

Monroe's language is the idiom of computerland. He points to the bathroom in case I'm in a "can't-wait mode." He speaks about using his sound-wave technique to "access all systems down the line" in the brain. And he bristles at the comparison of his world to the world of psychedelics. "We're not in the tune-in, drop-out mode here," he says.

Despite the high-tech syntax, I have no difficulty imagining Monroe in a more conventional setting. I envision him as a radio executive in a plush New York boardroom, or a hard-driving director in a radio studio, chain-smoking the same long cigarettes he smokes now, as he ponders programming decisions. That was his first career, when, during the Forties and Fifties, he produced, directed, wrote, and composed the background music for more than 400

radio programs, including the popular *Rocky Gordon*, a railroad adventure series inspired by his own brief stint as a youthful hobo. From these years as a radio producer, his voice retains the tone and pacing of the studio. From the succeeding years as vice president for programming at the Mutual Broadcasting System, he acquired his boardroom presence. Both serve him well in his second career.

Monroe forsook big-time broadcasting in 1961 and retreated to Nelson County. The ostensible motive for his move was the opportunity to own several black radio stations in North Carolina and Virginia. But there was a more important reason. In 1958, while minding his own business as an upscale executive in Westchester County, New York, he began having strange and inexplicable experiences during sleep.

First came a vibration, and before long, he recounts in his cult classic, *Journeys Out of the Body* (Doubleday, 1971), he found himself hovering ghostlike above his

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physical form on the bed. While in this near-massless state, which he called the second body, he was able to journey away from the bed, drop through the floor, and pass through walls, traveling down the street to spy on friends and neighbors. Though invisible, he managed to pinch some of them occasionally, he reports, leaving black-and-blue marks as tangible proof. Eventually, he believes, he even escaped the earth to chart unknown realms of time and space.

At first Monroe wondered if he were mad, seized by aberrant daydreams, hallucinations, or the hellish beginnings of schizophrenia. Finally he gathered the courage to seek advice from a friend, psychologist Foster Bradshaw.

"Why, there's nothing else you can do but look into it and see what it is," Bradshaw replied. "Anyhow, it doesn't seem you have much choice. If it happened to me, I'd go off in the woods somewhere and keep trying until I found the answer."

With a family to support, Monroe couldn't just take off for the wilderness. But he did vow to explore his "wild talent." He began living a double life. By day he was the tra-

ditional, high-powered businessman, and by night, a closet investigator, the Don Quixote of the beyond.

Acting as his own guinea pig, Monroe learned to induce waves of vibration through his body. Resonating with these waves, he soon discovered that he could "unhook himself from the physical with ridiculous ease" and consciously decide where he wished to travel.

In the beginning, he says, he merely visited friends in the here and now—people and places that exist in the material world at the moment of the experiment. He dubbed this sphere of things Locale I, but soon discovered that his filmy second body could also sojourn in Locale II—a "non-material environment with laws of motion and matter only remotely related to the material world." In this realm of "infinity and eternity," Monroe says, he met up with the newly dead and assorted subhuman entities, including devilish parasites that clung to his back. At first, he says, he was terrified, but later found the experience awe inspiring, even ecstatic.

Finally Monroe found yet another region—Locale III, which he suggests is an antimatter version of the known universe. Traveling through this alternate plane, in fact, Monroe claims that he inhabited the body of his human counterpart, complicating the poor fellow's love life and causing inordinate stress.

Monroe's adventures, in short, convinced him that most human beings separate from their physical bodies during sleep. If everyone could master the technique, he felt, we would come to understand nature, alter our view of death, and resolve religious conflict.

Medical science would explore the relationship between physical health and the second body, and explanations for neurosis, psychosis, the unconscious, and dreams would be revised or discarded. For the first time, we would truly understand the workings of the mind.

Thus, when Monroe left for Nelson County, in 1961, his goal was to mass-produce the out-of-body experience (OBE). Since his OBEs were always induced by a sense of vibration, he reasoned, similar vibrations might cause others to experience the phenomenon.

It's no surprise that Monroe, a sound specialist, used radio technology to re-create the effect. He reckoned that out-of-body vibrations were in some way related to electrical frequencies in the brain. Such frequencies, like sound waves, are generally measured in cycles per second, or hertz (Hz). Thus, Monroe figured, all he had to do was discover which brain-wave frequency was associated with the OBE, then re-create that frequency with sound. The brain, he guessed, would automatically resonate to the sound, in a phenomenon he called "frequency following response" (ffr), and generate the appropriate electrical frequency, invoking the OBE.

By 1961, of course, scientists measuring

brain-wave frequencies with an electroencephalograph, or EEG, already knew a few things: Beta waves (16 Hz and above) indicate wakefulness; alpha waves (12 to 7 Hz) indicate relaxed awareness; theta waves (7 to 4 Hz) are characteristic of the borderland between sleep and wakefulness; and delta waves (below 3.5 Hz) mark a deep, almost comatose sleep. Most states of consciousness are a combination of two or more waveforms, and the variety could be infinite.

Drawing upon this information, Monroe set up a small lab of his own. Working through the Sixties, he charted the brain waves associated with OBEs, intense concentration, and the very deepest sleep.

He also set out to induce these brain waves with sound. At first the task was daunting. While most brain waves are less than 16 Hz, the human ear cannot pick up anything less than 30 Hz. And if subjects couldn't detect the auditory cue, then the use of this technique seemed impossible.

But by 1975 Monroe's expertise in acoustics had provided the solution. He was, of course, familiar with a basic principle of physics: If two tuning forks of slightly different pitch are struck simultaneously, the resulting sound waxes and wanes periodically. These modulations are called beats, and their frequency is equal to the difference between the frequencies of the original tones. Thus, if one tuning fork is resonating at 200 Hz and the other at 206 Hz, the beats will be produced at a frequency of 6 Hz.

Monroe knew that the human ear would never detect such low-frequency sound. But, he reasoned, if he introduced separate sounds into each ear, then the neural pathways of the brain itself might resonate to the inaudible beat. Soon, he says, he found he was correct: "If I sent sound of one hundred hertz to one ear and one hundred four hertz to the other ear," he explains, "I would detect alpha brain waves at a frequency of four hertz—the difference between the two sounds." Moreover, he adds, the resulting alpha waves would invariably induce a state of deep relaxation or sleep.

Monroe says he also used his patented technique, dubbed hemispheric synchronization, or hemi-sync, to induce the OBE—a state of consciousness marked by a complex series of alpha, beta, theta, and delta waves. The trick, he explains, is to start by inducing physical sleep with alpha, theta, and delta waves. Then, just as the subject is losing consciousness, you introduce beta waves. "These jolt the mind awake while the body stays asleep," he explains, "setting the scene for an OBE."

It is 12 minutes into the mission, real time. Sitting before the console, Control keeps his eyes on the instruments, adjusting the theta/delta signal that is pushing the explorer deeper into relaxation, deeper into the hole. It is three days after Christmas, and Control prepares to direct his explorer

into a seasonal section of the library.

"Now then, look back into the accurate history of one whom our civilization labels Jesus Christ," Control instructs. "See what you can find out."

In a slow, grainy voice revealing great concentration, the explorer ponders his problem. "How can I interface with this energy column?" he says to prod himself. Even from these depths the dense jargon of computerland is natural to him; by day he is an electrical engineer. "The reason has to do with the consolidation of ideals," he says finally. "There were too many ideals . . . and this is interesting: It [the coming of Jesus] wasn't the first time it happened."

"When did it happen before?" Control asks calmly.

"On a number of occasions," the explorer replies definitively. "Sometime before the time of the Greeks."

"Does our recorded history know of these other visits?" Control asks diffidently. A multipatterned, combined sound

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flows steadily to the explorer now, placing him in the farthest reaches of Locale II, a realm where time has ceased to exist.

"Yes, primitive man knows of this. The teacher walked among two or three Indian tribes in the Americas. He was there only a short while—less than ten years—and then he vanished. In all these visits, the physical manifestation is similar. Tall man, six foot two or so, very large for the period. Auburn hair. Light skin, no olive tint."

"Let's move into an arena where there is recorded history," Control interjects. "When this being entered the body of Christ, was it at birth or later?"

"It was later," the explorer answers strongly, without hesitation. "He entered, and then he was called. This man Jesus was a little bit crazy for his time, I mean. People called him crazy. He was one hundred eighty degrees out of phase with his time. He was seeking truth. Apparently, in his twenties, he went into the desert. I see a tremendous amount of meditation and physical sacrifice. In his attempt to grasp truth he tried to stay away from the politics of the time. He went to a center of learning where there were people strong enough to

be different. Apparently he had special knowledge." From the capsule, the explorer's breath quickens with effort. "Oh, how in hell am I going to translate this?"

Control waits, appreciating the familiar problem. Since this mission is an exploration of new territory, the medium of translation is frightfully difficult. The explorer is receiving total information, thought balls in Control's lexicon, a complete package of data from *Locale II*. The explorer is trying to peel off individual layers of the thought ball, and once peeled off, to interpret and translate the layers into words comprehensible on the terra firma of *Locale I*.

"There was a vast necessity to mask ideals," the explorer strains. "Jesus chose an esoteric mystification that was different from all others. All other mystifications were dependent upon physical reward."

"Very good," Control compliments, encouraging the explorer. "Next point: Can you state the exact ideals of Jesus?"

"Hold on a minute," the explorer replies. It is as if he must search through the pages of a vast encyclopedia in which all knowledge is stored, or as if he thrusts an inverted periscope down to the deepest depths. "The answer is kind of neat," he finally says with a lilt. "The ideal is the interaction of all elements of the human race. The static on the line . . . is fear. Christ came to show that there was no need for fear. That was the whole idea: to establish that there was fear, and that fear was nothing. Love of fellow man was the ideal, but it was far more encompassing than that. It's like a tree growing. . . ." His voice trails off.

"Take it a point further," Control commands. "As we have recorded the physical life of this man called Jesus, is it accurate or inaccurate?"

"Hold on a minute," the explorer answers. Down periscope. "I'll find out. It's an interesting question."

It is 31 minutes into the mission.

"The life of Jesus as it is chronicled is inaccurate," the explorer proclaims.

If Monroe and his team of explorers thought they were getting answers, others felt they could benefit as well. In 1977 the Esalin Institute, in Big Sur, California, invited Monroe to conduct a hemi-sync workshop. Some 40 people participated, and the success convinced Monroe to hold workshops—he calls them traveling roadshows—around the country.

He also developed hemi-sync cassette tapes for relaxation, concentration, catnapping, enhanced sense of touch, and even for playing better golf and tennis. (In the tennis tape, which plays sound waves that induce relaxed concentration, you are encouraged to imagine the best game of tennis you've ever played, and then to repeat "Love tennis, love tennis" as you stride onto the court.)

Refining the tapes further, Monroe established his Gateway Program, in which, seven times a year, some 20 people come to Nelson County for a week of training.

Many of those who come have a professional interest in the workings of the brain; psychologists, psychiatrists, and educators are prominent. Other participants range from high-powered business executives to "seminar hoppers" who have tried Ekt or other self-awareness programs and think hemi-sync may be more scientific.

According to Monroe, that assumption is correct. The Gateway tapes, he claims, improve alertness, clarify thought, focus attention, induce calm, permit unusual feats of strength, and even make one a "super conversationalist." For the frequent traveler, he says, his tapes can cure jet lag. And for the pressured student or doctor, they can squeeze the benefits of a 90-minute sleep cycle into just half an hour.

Monroe's technique, in fact, has spread far and wide. In Providence, Rhode Island, medical students use the tapes to reduce anxiety at test time. In Tacoma, Washington, hemi-sync tapes have been designed for courses in psychology, philosophy, humanities, and speech. In that same city, first graders listen to a stereo system that plays slow hemi-sync music constantly. (The principal is "flabbergasted" at how orderly and engrossed the youngsters have become.) At Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, the U.S. Army reported a 76 percent increase in trainee efficiency after a hemi-sync anxiety-reducing signal was used as background. And because hemi-sync can deaden the sense of touch, it is being used to reduce pain for surgery patients in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Future applications, Monroe adds, may be even more intriguing. Since certain hemi-sync tapes induce sleep without chemicals, he sees the 30 million insomniacs in America as a potential market. (The institute is *not* nonprofit.) He also thinks that hemi-sync tapes might replace methadone and Antabuse as benign substitutes for heroin and alcohol, respectively. Those who have suffered stroke or other brain damage may be helped or at least distracted, because the tapes stimulate new neural pathways. And language students might one day listen to French, Spanish, or Arabic tapes laced with hemi-sync waves.

Hemi-sync's ability to influence behavior and induce suggestibility is put forward as a virtue, but Monroe knows it can be a vice, too. Who can say that the substance of political propaganda might not be similarly induced? What if Jerry Falwell were to place hemi-sync in the background of his sermons? And who's to prevent the ad tycoons on Madison Avenue from taking advantage of the technique? Moreover, since certain frequencies are said to induce brain seizures, might not this knowledge be developed into a new weapon?

In sleepy Nellysford, such applications seem remote. "We've never lost anyone," Monroe says to reassure me.

In fact, his literature, reminiscent of that found in pop self-improvement programs, promotes hemi-sync as a method "to allow

you to become more than you ever thought you could be." While Monroe insists that he is not practicing psychotherapy, he claims that ten sessions at his institute can be equivalent to ten years on the couch.

"Our process accesses hidden drives," Monroe tells me. "Fear and guilt inevitably come out. It gives a person a perception of his total self. It can profoundly change how that person approaches life." And by inducing altered states like OBE, he says, the sessions may change an individual's view of the world. Indeed, more than 3,100 people have gone through the Gateway experience, and, as a man of statistics, Monroe has computed more than 90,000 OBEs among them.

Dispatch from the library.

"Did Jesus maintain the being in the physical body until death? Is the death as represented?" Control asks.

"The death was as represented," the explorer replies after a pause. "But he didn't

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die on the cross. He died before he was nailed to the cross."

"I see, uh-huh," Control mumbles.

"And he wasn't nailed to the cross. His body was hung by ropes, and the soldiers drove spikes into the wood and tied his body by the ropes to the spikes."

Control shifts ground again. "What was the purpose of Jesus? What function was he performing?"

"The learning of man had become stagnant, and Jesus came as a kind of kick in the pants."

"One more thing," Control presses. "Who truly was this being that entered the body of Christ? What was his origin?"

Suddenly, for the first time on the Control console, a worrisome fluctuation in body voltage is indicated.

"I get a horrendous answer. It is fascinating. I have to say to you in these words: Bob Monroe already knows the answer. I'm supposed to tell you that. And then I get a laugh . . . With the laugh I get a flood of faces. Not human faces. Just a presentation of humanity. An essence."

The explorer is breathless, as if his vision has caused him fear and awe. He is

trying to remain calm, but his polarity—the balance between negative and positive electrical impulses in his body—swings widely. There have been hints of polarity change before, at moments of intense emotion. Control wants to know more. He seizes the opportunity and presses on.

"Is this being accessible to us now?" he asks. "Can we communicate with him?"

"Let's see. . . ." The silence is long.

Control worries that his explorer may be lost. "If the answer is yes, the question is, How can we make contact?" Control persists, feeling his breakthrough.

"That's what I'm trying to do!" the explorer replies in exasperation. "I'm getting whipped around here quite a bit. We've . . . we've got a problem here."

It is as if warning lights have lit up NASA's control board in Houston. Fluctuations in biomonitors have become wild, and polarity is shifting markedly. The explorer's emotions are intense during this overwhelming pattern of energy.

Control considers feeding the beta signal to bring the explorer back, under an emergency procedure. The danger is a searing, scarring memory that the explorer could carry into the here and now. But given the experience and unflappability of this explorer and the significance of the moment, Control waits.

"When I answered, I got into some sort of different operational mode," the explorer reports. "There's a new window . . . how interesting . . . I don't feel as if I have any control. It's really interesting. I'm being blasted apart in all directions. All of a sudden, I'm accessing thought balls that are linear as well as horizontal."

"I understand your window very well," the steady voice of Control drones, masking his concern for the wild behavior on the gauges. "You are very close to it."

"I'll touch it and see," the explorer announces bravely. It is a gutsy decision—only a seasoned explorer would have the courage, and only for him would Control allow it. They are both, Control and explorer, in a completely unknown, uncharted area now. "I'm afraid to touch it. Hold on a minute. It will take me a minute to push that crap out of the way." The crap is the fear. "There! That's it!"

The line goes dead. The polarity shift is complete, and there is only silence. The explorer is on the other side of the barrier—the remotest regions of Locale II—and he cannot speak.

Control hits the beta signal. "We have a good-enough answer for the moment, all right?" he says, and begins to pull the explorer back. "Start to make your return. Slowly. Easily. Release your energy. Count yourself back."

The explorer begins his ascent. From deep in the hole, he counts scale. By the count of four he wiggles his toes, his being reentering the physical body of Locale I, the here and now. In this mission, it becomes a perfect touchup rather than touchdown. He will remember going

through that new window, that critical barrier, as exquisite ecstasy.

"Watch out when you get up," Monroe calls out as he walks over to the dark capsule, where the explorer sits on the side of the water bed. It has been a successful, if not entirely trouble-free, mission.

Was this truth or gobbledygook? Was the explorer in touch with another, higher energy system or only with psychic symbols deep within himself? Was this really a library or only a brilliant, meaningless kaleidoscope of light? Just how far can hemi-sync take its practitioners, anyway?

Monroe won't take a position. More questions are raised in his laboratory than are answered, he concedes. As an engineer, his focus is on the applications of his breakthrough rather than on comprehending the pure science of it. He sees his group operating in an "exploratory mode," and he is "content to leave the double-blind studies to others.

"Pure science simply likes to find out and doesn't like to apply its findings," he tells me. "My great joy is making something of value out of this discovery. I know the phenomenon exists, but I don't know the scope. To do the real science is the province of others. Why does hemi-sync work? Sometimes I get into the morass of that question, though I prefer not to. If something works, I always say, use it!"

But with this overt dismissal of the need for scientific proof, Monroe invites skepticism. "Don't believe me. Don't believe anyone," he says. "The truth is available. It is personal. It can be taught and learned. You can gather it within yourself. I can provide you with the tools."

I take Monroe up on his offer and soon find myself on the water bed in the explorer's darkened capsule. A flat speaker, shaped something like the bill of a platypus, hangs from the ceiling above me. Monroe attaches electrodes to my fingers and hands me the earphones from the panel behind the bed. Then he leaves.

I wait for what seems like an eternity while Monroe throws switches in the next room. Abruptly, his soft radio voice not so much explodes as grows within my head.

"Are you comfortable?" he asks.

"Very comfortable," I answer. Soon afterward, I hear the pounding of the ocean surf against a beach, I see a storm of constantly moiling blue clouds against a black background. While I am technically asleep, I can never remember being as alert. And so, my own brief session ends.

Will a series of such experiences lead to profound thoughts, great creativity, and deep religious faith? No one can say for sure; so one must turn to those who are familiar with Monroe's work.

First is the testimony of loyal disciples, professionals who have used hemi-sync for enhanced relaxation, concentration, and learning; these people *do* seem satisfied. Dance therapist Kathryn A. Bright says that hemi-sync tapes have helped her autistic

patients gain greater awareness of others. And experimental psychologists Devon Edrington and Richard Giroux, of Tacoma Community College, say that students learning with hemi-sync in the background tested 10.19 percent higher than a control group *not* exposed to the tapes.

But a number of experts studying brain waves at the nation's leading institutes don't share this opinion.

Dr. Gerald Oster, a scientist at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, in New York, who is studying the effects of sound waves on the brain, is one such skeptic. Oster, whose work is widely published, has used a technique similar to Monroe's, introducing sounds of varying frequencies into each ear and recording the results. His EEG studies showed that the brain did in fact respond to the beat—to the frequency difference between the two sounds.

"I see no evidence, however, that the technique is therapeutic," he says. "I've done it to myself and felt no mood change at all. Then again," he adds, "I'm very intellectual about it. Maybe that hurts."

If hemi-sync is being questioned, what about OBE? Ronald K. Siegel, psychopharmacologist at the Neuropsychiatric Institute of the UCLA School of Medicine, is an expert on the subject of hallucinations. He has studied OBEs produced by drugs, isolation, and stress.

"The OBE," Siegel says, "can be understood as a dissociative reaction of the brain. People on certain drugs or in isolation tanks tend to *feel* removed from their bodies because ordinary sensory input has been suppressed. The situation alters perception in much the same way that going skin diving for the first time does. You achieve weightlessness, and the unusual sensation gives you a different view of the world."

Monroe *may* be inducing the OBE with his sound waves, Siegel concedes. But neither Monroe, his explorers, nor any of the Gateway participants have ever left the body for real. "People who aren't used to sensory deprivation or deep introspection are like Carlos Castaneda taking drugs for the first time," he says of workshop participants. "They interpret the experience as instruction, believing anything their Don Juan guide says."

The OBE is a valid, even powerful, experience, Siegel adds. But it is experience in the form of hallucination, something taking place within the physical brain, not outside of it. "These people are traveling in mental, not physical, space. I'll believe Monroe when he shows me the moon rocks, or when I see replicable experiments published in accredited, peer-reviewed journals. I am forced to reserve my acceptance until then."

But not everyone agrees. Some "new-thought" Christian sects have become intensely interested in the work of the Monroe Institute. To them, Monroe is addressing nothing short of the breakdown and reconstruction of the Holy Trinity. To such avant-garde Christians, Monroe is on the

verge of proving that the Holy Spirit lives within the mind and that the soul survives death and lives in eternity. Documenting the OBE, they say, could provide us with nothing less than verifiable, scientific proof of an afterlife.

In his office, Monroe leans back in his chair and looks out at the spare hills. A tartan boxer's hat is pushed back on his head. He sports a flannel shirt and comfortable sheep-wool slippers. Snuggled in his lap is a black cat, which he strokes as he gropes for words.

He talks about the soul cautiously, for he rejects the way the famous preacher in the next county uses that term. Such rigid usage, he believes, has led to the rejection of the overall concept of an afterlife.

"Preachers put the concepts of afterlife, soul, and eternity into a religious structure that modern man cannot accept," Monroe says. "Our work puts these concepts into a scientific structure that is acceptable. There is a matrix, a technology at work in this world. We know the facts, but we don't know the language or the base from which it operates. When we do, that's man plus."

Man plus. Monroe has made repeated references to this grandiose concept during our several days together. Man's newfound ability to encompass both eternity and aboriginality through the altered state, and especially through the OBE, renders him a thinking being, according to Monroe. He survives death and transcends the constricting "local traffic" of primal needs. Monroe speaks with the certainty of one who believes he has already experienced death, walked in the deep past and far future, and visited higher beings and souls of the dead.

If his discoveries are heeded, Monroe believes, a new species of man—one who has tripped the light fantastic of Locales I, II, and III—will result. Man plus, says Monroe, will control both sleep and wakefulness. He will be able to hold a bowl of rice in his hand and, through brain power alone, turn it into the equivalent of 2,000 calories. Woman plus will be able to ovulate when she wishes and will require clothes only for fashion and modesty.

"Man is approaching a window of opportunity," Monroe proclaims. "By expanding his consciousness, he has the chance to make a quantum jump in evolution. Those who don't convert to man plus will become phased out. And," he adds, "there are already about three thousand men plus in existence today."

Why wouldn't these 3,000 men plus try to control the world? I ask.

"The process by which man becomes man plus precludes the desire for that kind of control over other men. The way of achieving this advanced status leaches out that kind of thinking. These men plus may band together. They would know how to do that. But their purpose would not be to control the world. With their abilities and behavior, they would seem like gods, angels, aliens, or devils." □□